

Joint Standing Committee on the  
National Disability Insurance Scheme  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

### **Submission to the Inquiry into the provision of hearing services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

I am writing to the Inquiry to raise concerns about the impact NDIS will have with my daughter. [redacted] is 12 yrs old and has a profound hearing loss in one ear and a mild-severe hearing loss in the other ear. She currently wears one cochlear implant and one hearing aid.

I would like to address the following terms of reference:

1. The eligibility criteria for determining access to, and service needs of, deaf and hearing impaired people under the NDIS.
2. The adequacy of funding for hearing services under the NDIS.

### **The eligibility criteria for determining access to, and service needs of, deaf and hearing impaired people under the NDIS.**

The uncertainty of whether [redacted] will be eligible for NDIS is very concerning. Is she "deaf enough" to qualify for services? I believe that any child who has a hearing loss, whether in one ear or two, who requires hearing aids or cochlear implants in order to fully access sound should be automatically eligible for NDIS.

By some eligibility standards, such as Better Start, [redacted] good ear hears too well to qualify. Her average loss across the four frequencies in her better ear is above 40dB. However, judging eligibility by the level of hearing in the better ear does not adequately reflect [redacted] hearing ability.

[redacted] cannot have a conversation with her parents unless she is wearing her hearing aid and cochlear implant. Even when wearing them, [redacted] is not able to hear as well as her hearing peers. She struggles to understand her friends in a noisy school environment. She is reliant upon her hearing equipment, as well as

personal microphone system and soundfield system in the classroom in order to hear her teacher. My daughter has needed to attend a specialist school with Teachers of the Deaf for her whole schooling. She cannot understand tv or movies, or hear people on the telephone.

If you just looked at her average hearing level in her better ear, you would not get a true reflection of the amount of assistance                      needs in order to listen, hear and communicate.

Any child who has a hearing loss significant enough to require a hearing aid or cochlear implant in at least one ear, will need additional support throughout their whole life in order to fully access sound.

### **The adequacy of funding for hearing services under the NDIS**

My daughter is going to be reliant upon her hearing aid and cochlear implant for the rest of her life. I expect the NDIS to support her in supplying the most suitable devices. Cochlear implants and hearing aids needs to be provided free of charge. They need to be upgraded every 3 years, to ensure that she can hear to the best of her ability. The base model very rarely provides adequate functions and accessibility to sound. Repairs, replacements and batteries also need to be provided. Additional supports, such as waterproof accessories, shake-awake alarm clocks, smoke detectors, etc, should also be provided, to enable her to be fully independent.

If NDIS does not provide these essential services,                      will likely end up in a similar situation to many deaf adults now – she will be forced to stop using hearing aids/cochlear implants because she simply will not be able to afford the upkeep of them. This will greatly restrict her inclusion in the workforce and ability to be a fully functioning and contributing community member.

I fully expect the NDIS to support                      throughout her life, so that she can continue to wear her hearing aid and cochlear implant. They are essential to her daily life and ability to communicate.

I am hopeful that NDIS will recognize that all children who require assistive hearing devices, whether hearing aids or cochlear implants, have a permanent disability requiring ongoing involvement with the NDIS.